

Testimony Prepared for the  
House Government & Veterans Affairs Committee  
January 21, 2021  
By: Linda Svihovec, NDACo



**RE: OPPOSE House Bill 1182 – Party Affiliation for County/City Election Candidates**

Good morning Chairman Kasper and committee members. For the record, my name is Linda Svihovec, with the North Dakota Association of Counties. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony opposing HB 1182 which allows candidates for city and county offices to identify a political party to be listed on the ballot next to the individual's name.

The historical practice of electing county officials on a no-party ballot has been successful for many years. It encourages grass roots citizens to run for office and serve their communities whether they have chosen to affiliate with a political party or not. This promotes greater participation and interest in running for city, county, and school elections. Fourteen candidates filed petitions to run in the most recent county commissioner race in my home county of McKenzie. Three new commissioners were elected to that board, replacing two retiring commissioners and defeating an incumbent. The voters in McKenzie County did not know the party affiliation of those candidates when they elected six of the fourteen to advance from the primary election in June to the general election in November, and they didn't know it when they ultimately selected the three commissioners they felt would serve them best.

Local elected officials understand that it is in the best interest of their community to provide the services to their citizens efficiently and cost effectively, without political bias. Whether you are the county auditor calculating property tax levies for political subdivisions according to state law, or you are a county commissioner prioritizing a road maintenance program with limited funds so that your neighbors can reach their fields and children can be delivered safely to and from school, politics does not have a place.

The recall and election processes provide local citizens with a way to replace officials they are not happy with. There are several examples of North Dakota citizens expressing their dissatisfaction with the job a local official was doing and have used their voices at the ballot box. Those decisions were not made based on the officials' party affiliation, but rather because the voters in that community did not feel the official was effectively serving them.

Chairman Kasper and committee members, the ND Association of Counties and its members request a DO NOT PASS on HB1182, as politics has no place when it comes to efficiently delivering local services to county residents.